

Neither negotiation nor war for defense ‘sacred’: *Expert*

INTERVIEW

The one-year anniversary of the incumbent Iranian government provides a prime opportunity to size up the administration's performance through the lens of experts and activists across various fields. In this regard, a conversation was held with Shahabeddin Tabatabaei, secretary-general of the Nedaye Iranian Party and a reformist political activist. He also serves as a member of the government's Information Council. What follows is the full text of this interview:



Shahabeddin Tabatabaei



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (2nd-R) tours the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting headquarters, which was hit during the Israeli-imposed 12-day war, on the occasion of the National Journalist Day in Tehran, Iran, on August 10, 2025.
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How would you rate the government's performance over its first year as a political activist?

TABATABAEI: The past year of the Pezeshkian government should be weighed up in light of the prevailing conditions and considerations. Throughout this period, events unfolded in the country and for the government that, perhaps, one would expect to see over two presidential terms — but here, everything was crammed into just one year. We had everything from the very first day of the cabinet's formation and the inauguration ceremony, to the recent imposed 12-day war, and the longstanding chronic problems we are now grappling

with and seeing the consequences of. So, the government's performance must be evaluated with these coordinates in mind, factoring in the circumstances and timing, as well as the campaign promises made by the president during last year's election, to make a fair and accurate assessment. If I were to focus on these factors, I'd first highlight two or three traits of the president himself because, in my view, he is the driving force pushing forward this government. First, I believe this administration is a "problem-solving government". We had an era where instead of "solving problems," they were actually "carrying problems". Solving issues, especially

chronic ones, often comes with a price, and yes, it can stir up dissatisfaction. Certainly, some resist tackling these challenges. Addressing persistent crises causes pain and pressure. But the president has shown the courage to face up to these accumulated problems that previous administrations delayed addressing, partly to avoid damaging their own popularity or inviting criticism. These issues and crises are the shared baggage of all Iranian governments up to today. Mr. Pezeshkian's main promise was "unity," centered on problem-solving. His well-known phrase, "Let's not fight," showed that in areas where agreement is reached and conflict is avoided, issues



Perhaps one reason some of our problems have piled up unsolved is because, at times, certain people took the approach of denial, insisting: "There's nothing to worry about!" But today, the president takes a straightforward, honest approach, openly acknowledging these issues and presenting solutions. He also listens to criticism that comes with constructive suggestions and follows through on corrections as necessary.

can be smoothed out or even resolved. For example, at sensitive times, there was always concern within the Islamic Republic Establishment that certain provinces might flare up into crisis hotspots. But in the recent 12-day war, those very provinces — previously seen as potential trouble zones — became hubs of solidarity. Mr. Zainivand, the political deputy of the Interior Ministry, cited statistics on TV from the governor of Sistan and Baluchestan, noting that during those 12 days of war, over 10,000 public messages were poured into the Ministry of Intelligence reporting suspicious movements that could have threatened security. This is a major accomplishment; Sistan and Baluchestan remained calm, as did Kurdistan. The idea of unity and leveraging all capable Iranians in the executive arena paid off. Similarly, in other longstanding issues facing society, such as the matter of hijab, all stakeholders and claimants converged on a common ground. Those wishing to solve this issue moved the matter forward with consensus, ultimately achieving the satisfaction of the primary beneficiaries — the people. As Dr. Pezeshkian had always said metaphorically prior to his election, "Customer satisfaction matters." And the public was indeed pleased with this process. In short, I would say the government's major achievements, domestically and internationally, have been based on "unity". Part of the fruits of this unity came to light during the imposed 12-day war. Moreover, this unity also paved the way for international understanding — not only with neighboring countries but also with nations like Egypt, where relations had long been complicated. Internal unity helped iron out issues important to the Egyptians quietly. Another key point is that from day one, Mr. Pezeshkian stated, "I listen to the people." It has become clear that he truly hears the public, stands with them, and doesn't dig in his heels against them. If any segment of society or experts raises demands or criticisms, he listens and even goes beyond just hearing by acting on these critiques — the government steps up to adjust policies as needed. These developments have been crucial during this period.

The president recently held a media gathering to mark National Journalist Day, with press managers from across the political spectrum attending. Media figures spoke frankly and transparently to the president on various topics. You were present at the session — how do you assess the overall atmosphere and the key points raised?

One aspect that really stood out was that everyone who was allotted time managed to stick to their slot, especially considering the president had other engagements scheduled. Everyone respected the timing, and no one overstepped their designated window. Our issues and challenges are clear. Beyond a certain point, talking about them becomes mere repetition, so everyone stuck to their specific topics within their time limits, allowing all voices to be heard — from different factions and viewpoints, whether pro- or anti-negotiation, supporters or critics of the hijab law. All critiques and ideas were put forward in a very calm environment. The president responded after hearing their



Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (c) poses for a group photo with the country's leading media figures on the occasion of the National Journalist Day in Tehran, Iran, on August 10, 2025.
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